

3/25/99

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)

Food and Drug Administration

5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061

Rockville, Maryland 20852-9712 MAR 31 P1:58

Re: Docket # 98N-1038, "Irradiation in the Production, Processing, and Handling of Food"

To whom it may concern:

The FDA should retain the current labeling law, the current terminology of "treated with radiation" or "treated by irradiation," and the use of the radura symbol on all irradiated foods.

Regarding the issue of labeling, in its initial petition, the FDA concluded that irradiation was a "material fact" about the processing of a food, and should be disclosed. The material fact remains; therefore, labeling should remain. Consumer acceptability, storage qualities and nutrients are affected. Some irradiated foods have different texture and spoilage characteristics than untreated foods. Most fruits and vegetables have nutrient losses that are not obvious or expected by the consumer.

In addition, processing by irradiation causes chemical changes that are not evident and are potentially hazardous. Meat may have a higher level of carcinogenic benzene. All irradiated foods contain unique radiolytic products that have never been tested. Consumers certainly have a right to know if this process has been used on their food.

The label should be large enough to be readily visible to the consumer, on the front of the package. For displayed whole foods such as produce, a prominent informational display similar to that used for meats should be used (containing the term "irradiation" and the radura).

Because of the newness of the technology and the need to assess the public health effects of widespread use of irradiated foods, I believe that the FDA's labeling requirement should not be permitted to expire.

Sincerely,



Galen Nelson

cc: Representative Michael Capuano

Senator Ted Kennedy

Senator John Kerry

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